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fects ripening and flower production, though availability of various substances has effects that gardeners notice. Ample nitrogen keeps plants in leafy growth so flower production comes late; lack of potash may result in soft stems and poor fruit set. Coleworts (the cabbage family) thrive on tight soil while legumes thrive on looser soil. Some tropical composites, as marigolds and tithonia bloom best in mineral soil (low organic content) while others, as dahlias, thrive in generously manured soil. This points out why soil tests are necessary to get the most from each crop.

My yellow squash and zucchini have been devastated again this year by a white grub. The grub burrows through the stems and destroys the entire plant. How can I prevent this? D. C. A., N. J.

The squash borer most commonly found is the larva of a clear-wing moth (as lilac borer) and is controlled by spraying or dusting the plants from very small on (weekly) with a garden insecticide such as rotenone or methoxychlor. You must keep the base of the stem and all stem tissue covered with the protecting chemical. Most vegetable garden disease and insect pest control mixtures are effective if correctly applied.

The last of July I noticed all the leaves wilting on my Russian-olive tree (about five years old). We had enough rain so moisture was not lacking. Could something be attacking the roots? Mrs. V. M., Iowa

Likely, your problem is too good growing conditions. When Russian-olives grow out in the Great Plains and Mountain states they do fine; soil is high mineral, alkaline, and conditions are semi-arid. The plant, coming from similar conditions in western Asia, thrives. Move it to deeper, moister soils that are richer in humus, and where humidity is higher in summer, and the tree develops a die-back disease. Unfortunately, there is no simple way to control a vascular (internal) disease in trees. Prune away infected branches as quickly as they wilt (dip the clippers or saw in alcohol between each cut), avoid any watering or nitrogen fertilizing so the tree hardens. As potassium tends to harden plant tissues, it might help to apply a potash fertilizer in late summer or very early spring, or scatter wood ashes over the root zone through winter months. These are rich in potash. Usually a Russian-olive with die-back disease, when not overly succulent, makes more new growth than it loses so it survives and grows though requiring periodic pruning.

Parsnips don't germinate well for me. Last year I decided the difficulty might be planting depth, so I made two plantings in each row—one about half an inch deep, the other shallower on top of that. Seed was put in thickly at both depths. Seedlings were sparse. Each year plants are attacked by something causing the leaves to curl tightly. Some leaves turn brown and some plants are killed. Dusting with general-purpose garden dust helps but does not cure. Can you suggest a treatment for this problem? Last fall after the invasion had passed, leaves were luxuriant and some parsnips turned out fine. Others, dwarfed by whatever had attacked them, were an inch or less in diameter. M. B., Ill.

Parsnips need fertile, light, high humus, deeply worked soil. Where soil is heavy and tight, trenching, with quantities of compost and manure, is essential. Sow fresh seed in early spring as it germinates only in cold earth. Seed germinates irregularly and slowly so put down plenty—but seeds not touching—and intersow with a sparse scattering of radish seed to break the crust. In our clay, I cover the parsnip drill with one-fourth inch of pre-moistened soilless potting mix and get a good stand. Thin seedlings to stand two inches apart, later thin considerably more. Aphids and leafhoppers can be a problem; a spray of diazinon or malathion controls them (spray with an upturned nozzle to wet the foliage beneath). Occasionally a leaf blight, controlled with maneb, zineb, or ferbam, causes relatively minor problems. ❦❦